



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the OSCE's Head of Mission in Kosovo, Pascal Fieschi

As delivered by Deputy Representative Paul W. Jones
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 9, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States also warmly welcomes Ambassador Pascal to the Permanent Council today, and wishes to thank him for the hard work and dedication he has consistently shown in his three years as Head of Mission. We would also like to acknowledge his staff for their devotion to service and to their commitment to the idea that everyone in Kosovo of all ethnic backgrounds can and will live together in peace and security.

Ambassador Fieschi has delivered a balanced assessment of the progress Kosovo has achieved since the multi-ethnic violence last March, as well as the significant challenges that it currently faces. We agree with Ambassador Fieschi that the October 23 elections were a success in operational terms. The Central Election Commission, an OMIK-trained institution, played the principal role in these elections. OMIK's role was mainly advisory. The elections were run smoothly, with only minor technical glitches. And while we share Ambassador Fieschi's disappointment that most Kosovo Serbs chose to boycott the elections, we are pleased that the elections were freely and fairly conducted. This, as we have stated before, is a positive sign of Kosovo's evolving political maturity. It is also a clear measure of OMIK's effectiveness in fulfilling its institution-building mandate.

Other evidence of OMIK's institution-building success, as Ambassador Fieschi has pointed out, can be seen in the largely fair and balanced media coverage of the recent elections. There are, in fact, many other examples Ambassador Fieschi could have chosen to demonstrate OMIK's success in institution-building. The Assembly Support Initiative, for instance, is doing a fine job of teaching Kosovo's Assembly members about the importance of transparency, legislative review, constituency service, and other basic parliamentary principles. The training OMIK is providing to Kosovo's legal community is making real contributions to the establishment of a judicial system based on democratic principles and international human rights standards.

OMIK's role in running the Kosovo Police Service School has resulted in a police force that has earned wide trust among Kosovans themselves. The United States, in fact, considers the KPSS a model program of what the OSCE can achieve in the field. As many of you are aware, the KPSS has trained from scratch all of the nearly 7,000 officers that currently comprise the Kosovo Police Service. This force, which reflects Kosovo's overall ethnic distribution, has demonstrated that it can successfully patrol and operate together in mixed-ethnic communities, taking a small but important first step in building truly multi-ethnic institutions in Kosovo. In addition, according to UN data, the Kosovo Police Service has

received the highest favorability ratings of any institution in Kosovo, exceeding even those of KFOR and the UN civilian police force. This is a remarkable achievement.

But even as OMIK has achieved success in building institutions like the Central Election Committee and the Kosovo Police Service, Ambassador Fieschi is completely right to note that the new Assembly and government must make substantial progress in meeting the Standards as a precondition for opening up future status talks in mid-2005. The United States fully shares this view, and calls upon the new government to accelerate the implementation of Standards, particularly those that relate to multi-ethnicity, tolerance and rule of law. Reforming local government, starting with pilot projects early next year, will be a key to empowering and ensuring security for all Kosovo's communities, and to fulfilling the multi-ethnicity requirement that infuses all the Standards.

The United States would also like to remind the new government of its obligation to fully cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The United States expects individuals who are indicted in Kosovo or elsewhere to fully cooperate with the Tribunal.

Allow me to conclude by saying that OMIK has done much to promote democracy and stability in the region. In short, the United States considers OMIK a clear OSCE success story up to this point. As Ambassador Fieschi has observed, OMIK's institution-building role will only become more pronounced in the future as the presence of the international community gradually diminishes and further institutions are transferred to Kosovo control. The ending to OMIK's story in Kosovo is of course still unwritten and unknown. Despite all of OMIK's good efforts, at the end of the day, the stability, security, and political future of Kosovo will be determined by the commitment that the government and the multi-ethnic communities in Kosovo demonstrate to reaching the Standards the international community has put before them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.